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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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SUGAR AND SPICE . . .

And Thiamin And Protein And Vitamins. A nursery rhyme established what little girls and little boys are made of . . which may not be nutrition labeling in the true sense, but does point up the fact that people like to know what things are made of. It was partly this human curiosity that led consumers to request that the nutrients in the foods they eat be listed on the labels. In response, federal regulations and laws were passed. Initial responsibility for nutrition labeling was assigned to the Food and Drug Administration under its authority to insure safe, pure, and wholesome foods. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, with responsibility to oversee meat and poultry, is currently developing nutrition information to be used on labels for these products. Already shoppers will find nutrition information on many foods at the supermarket -- with more to come. By 1975 all fortified foods and all foods for which a nutrition claim is made must display nutrition information on the labels. The labels must provide information on the calories, protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins A and C, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, calcium, and iron in the package contents. Cholesterol, fatty acids, and sodium content may also be included. For information on nutrition labeling, consumers may write the Food and Drug Administration, Nutrition Labeling, Rockville, Maryland 20852 or contact the nearest FDA consumer affairs office. Also available are two 15-minute films, one featuring Dick Van Dyke and one with Pearl Bailey. The films, entitled "Read the Label, Set A Better Table," are on loan from FDA consumer affairs offices and from Modern Talking Pictures, 2323 New Hyde Park Road, New Hyde Park, N.Y. 11040. Copies of the films may also be purchased for \$58.25 each from the Sales Branch, National Audio Visual Center, GSA, Washington, D.C. 20409.

FOOD SHOPPING METHODS

Differ In Some Areas. If you think it's a hassle to do the family's weekly food shopping at the supermarket, consider: Under new Food Stamp regulations which went into effect on July 15, families receiving Food Stamps in remote areas of Alaska can now use food coupons to purchase certain hunting and fishing equipment for procuring food.



PERMANENT RECORD
CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

FOR LAZY HAZY DAYS

Put The Kids In A Blend. In a recent nationwide survey, mothers reported to USDA's Economic Research Service that they prefer a blend of cotton and polyester for most of their children's warm weather clothing. The mothers based their preference on practical qualities shared by the blends and the children: Both are washable and need no ironing. For nightwear, cotton is tops with mothers because it is cool and absorbent, feels comfortable on the skin, and is long lasting. More than three-fourths of the mothers said they were very interested in having children's clothing treated to be flame resistant and were willing to pay extra for this feature. Only about a third said they had seen flame-resistant clothing -- primarily nightwear -- in stores. A majority also indicated that clothing labels do not show the kinds of information they are most interested in -- shrinkage, flammability, and instructions on how to care for the garment. Copies of "Mothers' Attitudes Toward Cotton and Other Fibers in Children's Lightweight Clothing" (MRR-1026) are available free from the Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

UNDERSTANDING FOOD PRICES

The Real Facts About Food. Food prices have gone up. How much and why? A new USDA publication, "The Real Facts About Food," has the answers and can make you into an expert on the subject. The 24-page booklet is full of bits of information that give the casual reader a quick short-course in understanding food prices and what's behind tomorrow's headlines on the cost-of-living. It includes a short quiz so you can check your food price knowledge. Single free copies of "The Real Facts About Food" may be obtained by writing to the Special Reports Division, Room 407-A, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. A slide set/filmstrip version of "The Real Facts About Food" has also been produced. The 155-frame slide set with narration is available for \$35 from the Photography Division, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. The filmstrip may be ordered for \$15 from Photo Lab, Inc., 3825 Georgia Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20011.

REPRODUCIBLE FACTS

About Bacon, Sweetpotatoes, and Celery. One-pound packages of regularly sliced bacon contains about 20 to 22 slices; thick-sliced bacon runs about 12 slices to the pound . . . To be U.S. No. 1, sweetpotatoes must be firm, fairly smooth, clean, and defect-free . . . Slightly wilted celery can be freshened by placing the freshly trimmed butt end in water. These helpful hints come from three new information sheets on how to buy, store, and care for bacon, sweetpotatoes, and celery. The sheets, prepared by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, are designed as teaching aids for persons conducting food, nutrition, and consumer education programs. The one-page, illustrated sheets can be used as "camera copy" for offset reproduction. Copies of "How To Buy Bacon," "How To Buy Sweetpotatoes," and "How To Buy Celery" are available free from the Information Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

TOMATOES IN THE GREENHOUSE

For Eating And Learning. A sizable portion of the vegetable needs of the Byng, Oklahoma, school lunch program is furnished right in the classroom, according to USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. The key to the food production is a course in horticulture being taught in the rural Oklahoma school system. Greenhouses, constructed by students in coordinated vocational education training programs, provide the school cafeterias with almost all their tomatoes, plus substantial amounts of leaf lettuce and some eggplant. Each semester a new vegetable is added to the growing list. Both horticulture and vocational agriculture classes maintain the greenhouses, which during the first year of operation -- the 1972-73 school year -- produced 3,400 pounds of tomatoes. The addition of a plant farm -- actually a small air-cooled greenhouse -- allows tomato plants to be started during the hot summer months and in production by mid-September. A storage room has been built adjacent to the high school cafeteria to keep the produce fresh until used. The horticulture class has been an academic and financial success: Graduates have found ready employment in local greenhouses and the produce allowed the school system to maintain its 30-cent school lunch prices. Although most of Byng's students were already eating the Type A lunch, helping to grow some of the school's food has stimulated more student interest in meals that are served.

NEW USDA MOVIE

How A Good Egg Makes The Grade. That important little oval, the egg, is the subject of a new USDA movie. The 12-minute presentation, designed for use by home economists; extension specialists; consumer, civic, and industry groups; and other consumer educators, provides consumers with information on egg grades and sizes. It explains what the USDA grade on a carton of eggs means, how differences in egg quality are determined, and the role federal-state graders play in assuring top quality eggs in the marketplace. The 16 mm color film, produced by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, is the story of modern egg production and marketing. "Egg Grades -- A Matter of Quality" is available for sale from Motion Picture Service, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Prints are \$67 each. The film can also be borrowed from Cooperative Extension Service Libraries at Land Grant Colleges in the 50 states and Puerto Rico.

KENAF KRAFT

Substitute For Wood Pulp. The supply of wood for making paper is not keeping up with demand. By 1980, according to expert estimates, the gap between the wood supply and the pulp demand will be wide. Kenaf, a fiber plant similar to hemp, shows promise of filling part of the gap. Kenaf is a rapidly-growing annual found in wild and cultivated forms in several temperate and tropical areas of the world. The woody stems of the plant, which reach the height of 12 to 20 feet at time of harvest, yield a good paper pulp at less cost than hardwood. A commercial-type bond paper as well as strong kraft papers can be manufactured from it. Research by USDA's Agricultural Research Service indicate kenaf is an easy crop to grow and is adaptable to mechanized farming. They expect commercial production to develop shortly.

TRAVELERS INTEREST USDA INSPECTORS

Bag And Baggage. Federal quarantines prohibit bringing many agricultural items into the U.S. That's because foreign insects and diseases harbored in these items can cause severe damage to U.S. crops, forests, gardens, and livestock. And it happens -- to the tune of about \$12 billion annually. The quarantines apply not only to commercial shippers but also to vacationers, tourists, and businessmen coming into the country: All passenger baggage -- including handbags -- is inspected at U.S. ports of arrival by inspectors of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. To assist these travelers, APHIS has issued "Travelers' Tips," a new publication that spells out what agricultural items can and cannot be brought into the U.S. The booklet includes a list of foods, plants, and animal and plant products commonly available in foreign countries, noting whether or not they are restricted entry. There are tips on what to do if you visited a farm overseas, are bringing in a car that has been driven abroad, or want to obtain permission to bring in or mail in restricted items. If you are planning -- or dreaming -- of a trip abroad, checking beforehand the information in "Travelers' Tips" could save you unnecessary delay and possibly money on your return. Free copies of the new booklet may be obtained by writing "Travelers' Tips," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

CONVENIENCE FOODS

Not Necessarily More Expensive. As you check over convenience foods at the grocery store, have you thought, "I could make it from scratch for half the price"? On some items, yes. On others, convenience foods may prove to be more economical than if you bought the fresh product and prepared it at home. A survey conducted in early 1973 by USDA's Economic Research Service found that, on the average, 59 percent of the selected convenience foods had a per-cost serving equal to or less than comparable food in fresh form or prepared in the home. Among vegetables, the survey team discovered that 7 in 10 ready-to-cook items had a lower cost per serving than their fresh counterparts. For example, frozen green beans ran 8.1 cents a serving versus 8.9 cents for fresh beans; frozen cut corn cost 8.5 cents compared with 15.2 cents for fresh cut corn. Frozen french fries were 4.7 cents against 10 cents for home prepared, and dehydrated mashed potatoes ran 3.7 cents versus 5.5 cents for home prepared potatoes. Frozen orange juice cost only one-third as much as the same serving of fresh orange juice and bottled lemon juice, one-fifth as much as fresh juice. Of baked goods, 75 percent of the convenience products had higher costs than home prepared. Slightly over half the pork, beef, chicken, and turkey convenience foods were less expensive per serving, due in part to more efficient use by the processors of meat from a carcass.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Lillie Vincent, Editor of SERVICE, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Telephone (202) 447-5437.
